

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the present Amendment and the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-32 were pending prior to this amendment. Claim 1-14, 20-23, and 25-32 have been cancelled, and Claims 15-17 and 24 have been amended. No new matter has been added.

In the Office Action, Claims 17-18 were rejected under 35 USC 101; Claims 1-3, 6, 15-17, 22, and 24 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Fielder; Claims 4 and 20 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fielder in view of Yamagata; Claims 5, 20, and 25-29 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fielder in view of Hoss; Claims 7-14, 19, and 30-32 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fielder in view of Stringer; and Claim 21 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fielder in view of Morris.

In response to the 35 USC 101 rejection, Claim 17 has been amended to overcome the technical deficiency noted by the Examiner.

In response to the art rejections, dependent Claim 15 and 24 have been re-written in independent form. As re-written, those claims (and, hence, the claims depending therefrom) recite (using Applicants' specific disclosure as a non-limiting example of the breadth of the claims) that, as the piston pusher 126 is moved forwardly against the piston 202, the engaging claws 127 are progressively opened outwardly by contact with the piston flange 205 from their initial closed position. After that, the engaging claws 127 engage the edges of the piston flange 205 and return to their initial closed position, thereby gripping the piston flange 205. The gripping detection means (shown in Figs. 22 and 23) detect whether or not the engaging claws 127 are opened outwardly from their initial closed position, thereby detecting whether or not the engaging claws 127 grip the piston flange 205.

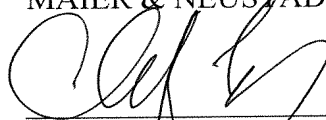
The office action asserts with regard to the original Claims 15 and 24 that element 44 of Fielder constitutes the claimed gripping detection means currently recited in the amended independent claims. Applicant's respectfully traverse. Fielder does not disclose a mechanism in which engaging claws are first progressively opened outwardly by contact with a piston flange and then returned to their initial closed position, gripping the piston flange.

Moreover, the Examiner's secondary references do not supply the deficiency of the primary reference. Accordingly, it is believed that all of the claims now presented are in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing, an early and favorable action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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